

Post-Familial Families and the Domestic Division of Labor: A View From Australia *

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Abstract

This paper takes as its starting point recent claims by Beck-Gernsheim that we are living in an era of “post-familial families.” Beck-Gernsheim argues that our lives are no longer structured as they once were by tradition, class, religion and kin. Instead the family has become a transitional phase as individuals strive for fulfillment of personal goals and personal life projects. The demographic evidence to support these claims is clearly evident in relation to changing patterns of family formation and dissolution, as well as the movement of married women into paid employment. But what is less evident is a decline in traditional patterns of gender stratification within families. This paper uses recent national data from Australia to examine the relationship between post-familial status, as indicated by marital status and employment, and time spent on housework. The results show that gender is still a clear predictor of time spent on housework, but that within gender there is evidence that gender inequality may be declining in non-traditional households.

Recent commentators have argued that the family, as we have known it, has disappeared. For example, Giddens (2001) has referred to a “global revolution” in how we think of ourselves and how we form ties with others. Similarly Beck-Gernsheim has written of the “post-familial family” (Beck-Gernsheim 2002). The defining hallmark of the post-familial family according to Beck-Gernsheim is that it has become a transitional phase in people’s lives . The family has not disappeared but has become a part-time commitment. The social significance of families has also changed. In place of durable sociostructural barriers and constraints traditionally set by family relationships is a new individualism in which life is a “planning project” with many new options and individual choices for lifestyle preferences and patterns. Our lives are no longer set by class, religion, tradition, family and kin relations, according to Beck-Gernsheim, but rather by new institutions such as the labor market, the welfare state, and the educational system (Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 44) which foster individual choice and variable life trajectories. Individuals are no longer born into a socially given situation, but must now produce their own lives in relation to the constraints and opportunities offered by these new institutions (Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 44).

On the face of it, the idea that life as a planning project has overtaken routinised movement through traditional lifecourse stages appears highly plausible. Patterns of household formation and dissolution have changed dramatically in recent decades in ways that call established institutions into question. For example, examination of demographic trends for age at first marriage, percent ever marrying, fertility patterns and divorce rates suggests that the ways in which individuals move through lifecourse transitions, as well as the nature and timing of these transitions, has undergone significant changes over the last 30 to 50 years. One of the most significant changes has been the increase in numbers of individuals choosing to cohabit in a de facto relationship at some stage in their lives. In

Australia this has risen from 16 per cent to approximately 60 per cent in the last thirty years. Similarly fertility rates in Australia have fallen dramatically during this period and the divorce rate has risen sharply.

But despite major changes in the timing, patterning and frequency of various lifecourse events, patterns within households appear to have undergone very little change. In particular, gender stratification within households appears relatively untouched by the changes that have taken place in patterns of household formation and dissolution. In spite of beliefs held by those active in the second wave feminist movement, women's increased participation in paid work has not led to major changes in the domestic division of labor (Coltrane 2000; Author 2002). Rather than men taking on a greater share of the load, women's increased labor force participation has been associated with women reducing their time on housework as a way of coping with the dual burden of paid and unpaid work (Author 2002; Author 2001). Hence while Beck-Gernsheim may be correct to argue that many of the traditional patterns of family life have changed, the post-familial family continues to depend on a traditional gender division of labor.

The current paper examines these issues. The broad question motivating the paper is how changing patterns of household formation and dissolution, as well as changes in women and men's levels of involvement in paid work, have altered the domestic division of labor. Married and cohabiting women's increasing labor force participation and changing patterns of household formation and dissolution appear to indicate the kind of individualistic "life as a project" that Beck-Gernsheim's work on the post-familial family draws attention to. But given the connections between household structure, labor market work and domestic labor, the emergence of "post-familial" households characterized by fluid patterns of household formation and dissolution, and increased involvement in paid work has significant

implications for the organization of domestic labor. To examine this issue we assess patterns of labor across different household types and in relation to husbands and wives' employment statuses.

Changing Patterns of Family Formation and Dissolution in Australia

There is little doubt that patterns of family formation and dissolution in Australia have undergone considerable changes in recent decades. Although marriage remains very popular, with the bulk of the Australian population marrying at least once in their lives, marriage rates have declined significantly since the mid-1970s, as shown in Figure 1, and moreover, the pathways to marriage and family formation have changed dramatically over this period. For example, Australia, like many other advanced countries, has experienced a huge growth in the percentage of couples choosing to cohabit with their partner in a de facto relationship rather than to marry (Glezer 1997; Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998). In Australia, 'of those who married in 1976, almost 16 per cent had cohabited prior to marriage. By 1992 this proportion had increased to 56 per cent' (De Vaus and Wolcott 1997:17).

(FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE)

But while the percentage of people who cohabit in a de facto relationship at some stage of their lives has increased dramatically, the proportion of couples in de facto relationships at any given time is relatively small (De Vaus and Wolcott 1997; Glezer 1997). In Australia in 1996, de facto couples comprised only about 10 per cent of all couples (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999). Some of these cohabitation unions will dissolve, but many others will move on to legal marriage. This suggests that de facto relationships should be seen as a stage in the 'courtship' process, or as a trial marriage, with many people then

choosing to marry (Glezer 1997). For many couples, then, de facto cohabitation appears to be an alternative at a particular stage in the life course, rather than a long-term rejection of marriage.

In line with the trend towards greater rates of de facto cohabitation prior to marriage, Australia has also witnessed a marked increase in age at first marriage. Young people are delaying the age at which they marry to the point where it is increasingly uncommon to marry before the age of 25 (De Vaus and Wolcott 1997; Weston et al. 2001). This trend is further supported by delays in the age at which young people leave home, delays in the age at which they enter full-time employment, and an increasing propensity to remain in education for longer periods.

Australia also has one of the lowest fertility levels of all OECD nations at just below 1.8 births per woman. As Figure 2 shows, the high point for Australian fertility levels occurred in the early 1960s, with women bearing an average of 3.5 babies in their lifetime. This rate fell considerably over the next two decades, to just below replacement level (2.1) in 1976. During the 1970s and 1980s, fertility levels remained stable, but they have fallen again during the 1990s to below 1.8 (Weston et al. 2001). Interestingly there are marked variations in fertility levels by age. While the fall in fertility is apparent across all age groups, the fall has been most marked among younger women below the age of 30. In contrast, the proportion of women over age 30 giving birth has risen in recent decades, and increasingly these women tend to be first-time mothers (Weston et al. 2001). This reflects the trend away from teenage women giving birth and the general trend towards delaying child-bearing (De Vaus and Wolcott 1997).

(FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE)

At the other end of the marriage cycle, the rate of divorce has also risen dramatically since the mid-1970s (see Figure 3). In the early part of the twentieth century the number of divorces was negligible, rising slightly in the 1940s, possibly due to the instability and disruption caused by war, and then falling again throughout the 1960s (Weston et al. 2001). In 1975 the Family Law Act was introduced in Australia providing for no-fault divorce. The act allowed a divorce based on irretrievable breakdown as measured by at least twelve months of separation (Weston et al. 2001). Following the introduction of the act, there was a sharp increase in the rate of divorces, rising to 4.5 per 1,000 population in 1976. Since then the rate has declined to approximately 2.5 to 2.9 per 1,000 population, and has remained steady.

(FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE)

These trends in family formation and dissolution are not unique to Australia. Similar patterns have been documented for the US (Bumpass and Lu 2000) and Europe (Kiernan 2000), although the pace of change varies across countries. For example, although Australia's fertility levels are low, they are not as low as those in Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Greece, Portugal, Japan, Hong Kong or Macau, countries that in 1995 all had total fertility rates lower than 1.5 (McDonald 2000). Although Australia and the US have similar patterns of divorce rates, with the divorce rate peaking in both countries in the late 1970s and early 1980s, since then the patterns have diverged. The US has experienced a slow drop-off in the divorce rate since the early 1980s, whereas in Australia the rate declined to just below 3 per 1,000 and since then has remained steady (Coltrane and Collins 2001:128). Similarly, although both countries have experienced similar marriage-pattern rates since the turn of the century, with the peak in both countries occurring just after World War II, in

Australia the marriage rate has declined more sharply than in the US (Coltrane and Collins 2001).

Changing Patterns of Labor Force Involvement for Men and Women in Australia

The movement of married women into paid employment since the end of the Second World War has been one of the major social changes in advanced capitalist societies. For example, in 1954 less than one in three women in Australia aged 15-64 (29 per cent) were employed and only 31 per cent of these women were married. By 1998 60 per cent of women were employed and 61 per cent were married (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998). Most strikingly, the labor force participation rate of married women has increased from 34 per cent in 1968 to 63 per cent in 1998 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998). These changes have been brought about by a combination of changing labor market structures, such as the decline of the manufacturing sector and rise of the service sector, the removal of legal barriers, such as the marriage bar forcing women to resign from public sector employment upon marriage (Deacon 1989), and the passing of other forms of legislation that improved women's access to paid work, such as equal pay for equal work legislation in 1969, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act in 1986 and the Sex Discrimination Act in 1986, as well as changing social attitudes about gender roles.

Despite these massive increases in female labor force participation rates however, and *married* women's labor force participation rates in particular, women's employment patterns over the lifecourse still look very different to men's employment patterns. Specifically, most women work part-time for a significant proportion of their working lives, particularly when there are young children in the household, while the majority of men work full-time for the duration of their working lives. Women's participation is closely tied to the age of their youngest child. In 1997 46 per cent of married mothers with a child aged 0-4 were employed,

but most of these mothers were in part-time employment (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998). While the participation of men in part-time employment has also increased slightly in recent years, the increase is associated with men's increased participation in higher education during the early years of the lifecourse, and at the other end of the lifecourse, a tendency to work part-time during the retirement years. The dominant pattern then is for men to enter full-time employment after they complete their education and to remain in full-time employment until retirement. For women, the dominant pattern is to enter full-time employment after education and to remain there until the birth of the first child. Employment then usually declines dramatically, although not completely, until the youngest child enters school (Evans 2000). Women with teenage and older dependent children are more likely to work full-time than women with children in primary school.

It is not difficult to understand why women leave employment or move into part-time employment upon the birth of the first child. First the Australian labor market is structured around a male breadwinner model of employment with hours and conditions that leave little room for the flexibility needed to accommodate the needs and timetables of young children. Second, compared to countries such as Sweden and Norway that have specifically sought to develop policies that enable parents to combine paid and unpaid work (such as generous maternity and paternity leave policies), there is little in the way of work and family policies in Australia that encourage women to maintain full-time employment when they have young children (Author 2001). Third, childcare is typically expensive and often difficult to access. Fourth despite over three decades of equal pay for equal work legislation, the gender gap in earnings between men and women is still clearly evident and possibly growing, thereby encouraging women rather than men to withdraw from paid work to take on caring responsibilities.

The Domestic Division of Labor

How does household structure and patterns of labor force involvement affect the domestic division of labor? Two main models have dominated earlier literature on the domestic division of labour. Under a model of economic exchange (Brines 1994) the person with the least time and the most economic resources should perform the least household labor. Within this framework, the allocation of labor in the household is seen as fundamentally economic and rational. Men provide income for the household, and in exchange, women perform unpaid domestic labor. As women increase their involvement in the paid labor market, however, they also increase their contribution to household income and the division of labor should consequently become more equal as couples rationally allocate their time between labor market and domestic work.

On this basis we would expect that the increased involvement of married women in paid work, and their consequent increased access to earnings, would lead to a more equitable division of labor in the home over time. There is some evidence for this trend. Men's hours of paid work have been found to affect men's time on housework with longer hours of paid work leading to less time on housework (Brines 1993; Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane 1992; Waite and Goldscheider 1992). But the relationship between hours of employment and hours of housework is stronger and more consistent for women. Many studies have found that women do significantly less housework as time in paid employment increases (Author 1993; Kalleberg and Rosenfeld 1990), and also that men with wives in paid employment do somewhat more housework than men with wives who are not in paid employment (Author 1993).

In terms of earnings, some research has found that the more dependent husbands are on their wives for income the less housework they perform (Brines 1994). More consistent though is the finding that proportionate share of household earnings is associated with more

equal divisions of labor (Author 1993; Coltrane 1996; Sanchez and Thomson 1997; Sullivan 1997). As men's and women's share of household earnings increase they spend less time on housework.

Alternatively, the gender display model points to the symbolic construction of housework as women's work and as a display of women's love for her family and subordination to her husband (Berk 1985; Ferree 1990). Based on the work of West and Zimmerman (1987) gender is conceived as "an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society" (West and Zimmerman 1987: 126).

Berk applied this model to housework arguing that current arrangements for the organization of domestic work support two production processes: household goods and services, and gender (1985: 201). She argued that the marital household is a "gender factory" where, in addition to accomplishing tasks, housework produces gender through the everyday enactment of dominance, submission and other behaviours symbolically linked to gender. The process of "doing gender" does not operate at a conscious level. But rather gender, or gender identity, is tacitly produced as men and women carry out routine household tasks. Doing housework then is an important component of doing gender and helps to explain why gender far outweighs other factors in explaining who does housework, why housework is not allocated efficiently or rationally according to who has the most time, and why men and women are likely to see the division of labor as fair, even though it is objectively unequally distributed (Ferree 1990: 876-877).

How do these frameworks fit with Beck-Gernsheim's claim that personal choice and individualization have overtaken the old certainties rooted in tradition, religion and biology? One expectation is that we should see greater variation in domestic labor arrangements between the genders within families, in addition to the variations noted above in patterns of

household formation and dissolution and men's and women's labor market involvement. In other words, greater choice and personal freedom should also lead to greater variation in the domestic division of labor across differing household types and in relation to varying levels of labor market involvement. For men, this will not necessarily lead to greater involvement in domestic labor since greater freedom and less constraints from traditional institutions is unlikely to induce greater involvement in unpaid work. For women on the other hand, we are likely to see less involvement in domestic labor as the opportunities increasingly available for women outside the home, combined with the changing patterns of household formation and dissolution noted above may enable them to opt out of traditional household work.

This paper investigates these questions using recent national household survey data from Australia. It begins by describing the gender division of labor in Australian households and then examines the relationship between household type and labour market involvement and the domestic division of labor.

The Data

The data come from the first wave (2000) of The Household, Income and Labor Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, a national household panel survey comprising 7,692 households and 13,969 individuals. Households were selected using a multi-stage sampling approach, achieving a 66 per cent response rate (Watson & Wooden 2002). Within households, data were collected from each person aged over 15 with face-to-face interviews and self-completed questionnaires. A 92 per cent response rate was achieved within households (Watson and Wooden 2002).

The Sample

For the current analysis we use the individual-level data and restrict the sample to people aged over 18 years at the time of survey. We omit respondents who had missing values on the housework items. In total around 10 per cent of the sample was omitted, mostly due to

respondents who did not return their self-completed questionnaires (7 per cent), and a smaller number of respondents with missing item responses, and out of range responses (approximately 3 per cent).

The Variables

The dependent variable used in this paper is based on a self-report question asking how many hours the respondent spends each week doing housework. This question was contained in the self-completed questionnaire. Housework was defined to include meal preparation, washing dishes, cleaning house, washing clothes, ironing and sewing.

Table 1 shows the definitions and descriptions of the independent variables. The independent variables included in the analyses are controls for key socio-demographic factors that have been found to affect domestic labor involvement (Berk 1985; Coltrane 2000; Author 2002). Since our key focus here is on examining the relationship between “post-familial” status and the domestic division of labor, the primary independent variable is marital status. We use a detailed measure comprising six categories: married, defacto, separated, divorced, widowed, never married, with married the reference category.

(TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

A control is also included for the number of the respondent’s own children who reside in the household at least 50 per cent of the time, measured as a continuous variable, with a dummy variable for whether or not any of those children are pre-school age.

We also include two workforce participation measures. The first is a detailed measure of employment status comprising the categories of employed, unemployed, retired, home duties and students with an ‘other’ category that includes volunteers, carers and people who

cannot work due to their own ill health. The second measure is the number of hours worked per week in all jobs.

An index that indicates a person's attitudes towards gender and work is also included. The variable is made up of five Likert scale items including: 'If both partners in a couple work, they should share equally in the housework and care of children'; 'Mothers who don't really need the money shouldn't work'; 'Children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and children'; 'It is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children'; 'and ' A father should be as heavily involved in the care of his children as the mother'. The Likert scale items ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). To create the index, all items were scored so that a higher score indicated more liberal gender and work attitudes and all items were summed. The final index has a cronbach's alpha of .73, and ranges from 0 to 35. Missing values for the index were coded to zero and a dummy variable for the missing was included in the analysis.

Finally a relative contribution to household income variable was developed. This measure represents the proportion of household income in financial year 1999/2000 contributed by each respondent. Household income was defined as the sum of the gross financial year incomes of the male-head and female-head of the household. The income contribution variable is then the proportion of household income that the respondent's income represents. For example, in a household where the male-head earns \$65,000, and the female-head earns \$35,000, the male contributes 65 per cent of the household's income and the female contributes 35 per cent. People living alone or in share houses, and adult children (over 18) living with their parents were treated as their own household and assigned 100 per cent. There was a large amount of missing data for this variable due to missing income data for one or both respondents. Missing values were coded to zero and a dummy variable for the

missing was included in the analysis. In addition to the above variables all analyses were adjusted for respondent's age measured as a continuous variable, and top-coded to 90 years.

The analyses

We first examine the extent to which gender is the dominant factor determining the allocation of unpaid hours and then consider the bivariate relationship between employment status within households and time spent on housework. We then fit six analytic models using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. The first model is a baseline model with marital status as the only explanatory variable. Models 2 to 5 add different theoretically salient independent variables to the baseline, and Model 6 includes all independent variables simultaneously. Model 2 adds variables for children in the household to the baseline, Model 3 includes the work force participation measures, Model 4 includes the gender and work attitude index and Model 5 adjusts for the relative income contribution score.

Because some of our respondents live in the same household, some observations are not statistically independent. This violates a standard assumption of OLS regression that the data and residuals are independently and identically distributed. We therefore adjust for clustering within households by using a robust variance estimator adjusted for within-household clustering (StataCorp 2003). This corrects standard errors for the dependence of observations within households (Korn & Graubard 1995).

Results

Men and women report vastly different levels of responsibility for unpaid labour within the household. On average women report spending 18 hours per week on housework tasks, while men report just below 7 hours per week on these activities (data not shown). Furthermore gender explains 17 per cent of the variance in time spent on housework. This was calculated by estimating an OLS regression equation on a combined sample of men and women with

gender as the only independent variable (data not shown). As shown later, the full model for women with all independent variables explains only 18 per cent of the variance. This indicates that gender is still a primary indicator of who does housework.

Table 2 shows the number of hours men and women in couple households spend on housework per week in relation to employment status. Note that the sample here is confined to men and women living in couple households with the aim of examining in a preliminary way the relationship between employment status and men's and women's time on housework. Note too that the numbers in some of the cells, particularly the bottom two rows are too small to provide reliable estimates.

What stands out immediately is that in all household types women spend more time on housework even when men are unemployed or retired and women are employed full-time or part-time. The gender gap is smallest in households where men are retired and women are employed fulltime, but even here women still report an additional 2 hours per week on housework compared to their partners (means are 11 hours for women and 9 hours for men). Further in households where both partners are employed fulltime women spend an additional 8 hours per week on housework compared to men. In households where men are employed fulltime and women are doing home duties, the gender gap in mean housework hours is 23 hours. Overall then it appears that the gender division of labour is subject to considerable variation in relation to men's and women's employment status. But even when men's and women's traditional roles in paid employment are reversed, such as when men are employed part-time and women are employed full-time, women still spend longer hours on housework than men.

(TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE)

Table 3 reports results for the six regression models predicting housework hours for women and men. The first model includes the dummy variables for marital status only. Subsequent models add subsets of the remaining independent variables with children first, followed by labor market characteristics, gender role attitudes, the gender income gap and finally the full model with all the independent variables. This strategy shows how individual groups of covariates moderate the group differences in housework among respondents in different types of households.

(TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE)

The first model shows that marital status has a significant effect on hours per week on housework. Married men do less housework than men in de facto relationships, as well as men who are separated, divorced, widowed and never married. At the same time, married women spend more time on housework than women in other marital statuses. This is consistent with the findings of earlier research (South and Spitze 1994; Gupta 1999; Author forthcoming). Married men do less housework than men without partners (i.e. separated, divorced, widowed and never married men), because in married households women do more of the housework and men are therefore able to do less. However, married men also do less housework than men in de facto relationships, while married women do more housework than women in defacto relationships. In more traditional (i.e. married) couple households we thus see a more entrenched gender division of labor than in less traditional couple households.

For men, marital status differences in time spent on housework are largely unaffected by the introduction of other explanatory variables in Models 2 through 6. For women, on the other hand, some changes are apparent. In model 2, for men, controlling for the number of children and the presence of preschool children results in slightly larger marital status

differences in housework than were found in Model 1. The patterning of differences is the same, with married men doing less housework than other men, but the differences are larger. Children are also associated with increased time on housework, for men as shown in Model 3. Thus, male marital status differences in Model 1 are actually attenuated somewhat when the impact of children on men's housework is not controlled.

For women, on the other hand, controlling for children diminishes marital status differences in housework relative to the baseline model. Children also add substantially to women's housework. As Table 3 shows, for model 2, each child is associated with an extra 2.7 hours of housework per week for women, while women with at least one pre-school child do about 4.7 hours per week more housework than women without a preschool child or children. These results suggest that married women's extra time on housework, in comparison to other women, partly reflects the presence of children in the household. Finally, the model 2 results also show that while children add to the number of hours that both men and women spend on housework, the burden falls more heavily on women, with pre school aged children adding an extra 4.8 hours per week compared to an additional 1.3 hours per week for men. Further every additional child adds 2.7 hours per week to women's housework load and an additional .4 hours per week to men's housework load.

Model 3 adds the independent variables for employment status and hours worked per week in paid employment. Additional hours per week in paid labour reduce time spent on housework for both men and women, but the reduction is greater for women than men with every additional hour of paid work being associated with .17 hours less on housework for women and .04 less for men. Unemployed men do an additional 1.8 hours per week more than employed men and men who are doing home duties do 8.6 hours more housework per week than employed men. However, there are relatively few men in both these categories in the sample and we should be cautious about these findings. The patterns for women are in

line with expectations. Women doing home duties do an additional 4.5 hours per week of housework compared to employed women and women who are studying fulltime do approximately 5 hours less than employed women. These patterns hold in the final model.

Controlling for labor market differences accounts for a small part of the male marital status differences in housework, as a comparison of Models 3 and 1 shows, but its impact on female marital status differences is mixed. The largest effect is to shrink the difference between married and de facto women from just over 4 hours in model 1 to almost 3 hours in model 3. In other words about 25% of the marital status gap in housework between married and de facto women reflects differences in employment status and hours worked between these women.

Models 4 and 5 add the gender attitudes scale and the household income variable. These are key predictors of time spent on housework as shown by earlier research (Author 1992; Sanchez and Thomson 1997; Coltrane 2000). Consistent with earlier studies the results here show that men with more liberal gender role attitudes spend more time on housework than men with more conservative attitudes, while for women, liberal attitudes are associated with less time on housework. There is also support for the findings of earlier studies showing that the proportionate share of household earnings is a significant factor determining housework time. As men's and women's share of the earnings increase they spend less time on housework. Controlling for attitudinal differences does little to diminish the marital status differences identified in Model 1, for either women or men, while controlling for contribution to household income actually results in slightly larger differences by marital status for men in Model 5 compared to Model 1. For women, in contrast, controlling for contribution to household income helps to explain some of the differences in housework by marital status shown in model 1.

Finally, model 6 incorporates all explanatory variables. For men, both the number of children and the presence of preschool children add significantly to time spent on housework and unemployed men and men on home duties do more housework than employed men. Men with liberal attitudes also do more housework than men with traditional gender attitudes. However, despite these other significant predictors, marital status differences are still much the same as in model 1, with married men clearly doing least housework.

For women the significant predictors again are the children variables, employment status and hours worked, gender attitudes and the income contribution variable. However, unlike men, these variables do account for at least some of the differences in time spent on housework associated with marital status. Moreover, model 6 for women explains 18 per cent of the variance in housework time for women, but only 8 percent for men.

Conclusion

Claims that we are witnessing a movement away from traditional family patterns to what might be called an era of “post-familial families” clearly have some merit when we consider trends in patterns of household formation and dissolution. Australia, like many other western countries, has experienced enormous changes in the ways in which individuals form family ties and the timing and length of these relationships. Additionally we have witnessed dramatic changes in women’s participation rates in paid employment and in particular a large increase in the involvement of married women in paid employment. Despite these changes however, gender stratification within families has changed far more slowly. Gender is still the key determinant of who does domestic labour with women continuing to far outperform men in this area.

However, there are two caveats to this general conclusion. First when women participate in paid employment the gender gap in time on housework is reduced, if not

reversed. This trend is driven by an apparent reduction in women's time spent on housework rather than a significant increase in men's time on housework. In other words, women appear to cope with the dual burden of paid and unpaid work by spending less time doing housework. At the same time, there is evidence that women's increased economic power from employment earnings enables a more equitable division of household labour. Thus it appears that a combination of increased economic power, as well as less time available for housework, leads to a reduction in women's time on housework.

Second, the gender division of time on housework is most traditional in married households. Men in de facto relationships, as well as those who are separated, divorced, widowed and never married all spend significantly more time on housework than married men. Moreover these patterns hold when other variations are held constant. Similarly, married women spend more time on housework than women in de facto relationships or women who are separated, divorced, widowed and never married. To the extent that the era of post-familial families means less time spent in married relationships then, we are witnessing a reduction in gender inequality in the home. Other research also suggests that couples that come to marriage via a period of de facto coupling have more equitable arrangements than those who do not spend time in a de facto relationship (Author forthcoming). This suggests that new pathways into marriage may attenuate traditional gender patterns after marriage.

The new individualism of the post-familial era then is changing, albeit slowly, the gender division of labour in the home. Most of this change is driven by changes in what women do at home. Not surprisingly, new options for lifestyle preferences and patterns have not led to greater time spent on housework by men. Why would they? The low status and unpaid nature of housework is hardly an inducement for men to spend more time on it. On the

other hand, it appears that for some women, paid employment and new patterns of family relationships are providing greater opportunities to spend less time on housework.

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Table 1: Description of Variables, by Gender

Variable	Description	Men		Women	
		Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
N		5658		6320	
Age (years)	Age last birthday, top coded to 90	44.99	(16.5)	44.79	(16.8)
<u>Marital Status</u>					
Married	Dummy for people legally married (reference category)	0.59	(0.5)	0.56	(0.5)
DeFacto	Dummy for people living with a partner, but not legally married.	0.10	(0.3)	0.10	(0.3)
Separated	Dummy for people who are separated, but not divorced.	0.03	(0.2)	0.04	(0.2)
Divorced	Dummy for people officially divorced.	0.05	(0.2)	0.07	(0.2)
Widowed	Dummy for people who are widowed.	0.02	(0.1)	0.07	(0.3)
Never Married	Dummy for people never married and not de facto.	0.21	(0.4)	0.16	(0.4)
<u>Family Status</u>					
Number of Children	Number of respondent's children under the age of 15 residing in household at least 50% of the time.	0.53	(1.0)	0.63	(1.0)
Pre-school child	Dummy variable, coded 1 if respondents own preschool child (child under 5) resides in household at least 50% of time.	0.13	(0.3)	0.15	(0.4)
<u>Work Status</u>					
Work Hours	Continuous variable for number of hours worked per week, coded to 0 if respondent is not employed.	31.28	(23.7)	17.74	(19.4)
Employed	Dummy for people in paid employment (full or part time)	0.70	(0.5)	0.56	(0.5)
Unemployed	Dummy for people who are unemployed, but looking for work.	0.05	(0.2)	0.02	(0.2)
Retired	Dummy for people who have retired out of the work force.	0.18	(0.4)	0.17	(0.4)
Home Duties	Dummy for people not in the work force doing voluntary home duties.	0.01	(0.1)	0.20	(0.2)
Student	Dummy for full time students not working.	0.02	(0.2)	0.03	(0.1)
Other	Dummy for people not working for other reasons, ie volunteers, disabled, carers.	0.03	(0.2)	0.17	(0.1)
<u>Attitudes</u>					
Gender/Work Attitudes	Index ranging from 0-35, with higher values indicating more liberal views	23.95	(6.3)	25.31	(6.9)
Missing Items	Dummy for missing values on the attitudes scale	0.01	(0.1)	0.02	(0.1)
<u>Power</u>					
Gender Income Gap (%)	Proportion (%) of income that each partner contributes to combined household income	59.46	(38.9)	45.98	(40.9)
Missing Income Gap	Dummy for missing values on gender income gap variable	0.21	(0.4)	0.23	(0.4)

Table 2: Mean hours of housework per week in couple households (N=4038), by gender and employment status.

		Women Full Time Employed		Women Part Time Employed		Women Unemployed		Women Retired		Women Home Duties		Women Other ^a	
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Men Full Time Employed	HW	6.0 (.18)	14.3 * (.39)	5.2 (.21)	20.1 * (.47)	5.5 (1.2)	20.5 * (2.2)	3.6 (1.3)	23.7 * (2.8)	4.6 (.27)	27.5 * (.74)	6.6 (.92)	16.9 * (2.0)
	N ^b	868		830		39		30		545		44	
Men Part-time Employed	HW	6.7 (.67)	14.3 * (1.2)	5.7 (.63)	18.7 * (1.4)	5.6 (2.6)	23.4 * (2.9)	5.4 (1.5)	21.6 * (2.5)	5.9 (.86)	31.8 * (3.2)	4.0 (1.0)	13.5 * (2.2)
	N	98		77		5		13		65		6	
Men Unemployed	HW	10.6 (1.7)	16.0 (3.2)	9.5 (2.3)	16.1 (2.2)	8.9 (1.5)	14.7 (2.4)	8.5 (6.5)	21.0 (9.0)	9.2 (2.1)	21.8 * (2.8)	8.7 (2.1)	16.3 (6.2)
	N	31		20		15		2		44		7	
Men Retired	HW	9.0 (1.6)	11.1 (1.5)	9.1 (1.3)	23.9 * (2.2)	13.2 (2.2)	34.7 (7.2)	7.3 (.52)	23.2 * (.77)	7.5 (.93)	25.9 * (1.6)	3.7 (1.9)	39.3 (10.5)
	N	25		34		6		523		127		3	
Men Home Duties	HW	13.0 (2.3)	16.5 (2.4)	11.0 (4.0)	11.5 (1.5)	3.0 (0.0)	14.0 (0.0)	43.3 (21.8)	10.3 (9.8)	16.4 (4.8)	20.2 (12.6)	15.5 (9.5)	8.0 (4.0)
	N	28		2		1		3		5		2	
Men Other ^a	HW	6.0 (1.0)	13.5 (2.9)	8.4 (1.8)	15.6 (2.6)	5.0 (3.1)	9.5 (1.7)	-	-	6.0 (1.3)	26.9 * (3.4)	9.5 (1.7)	17.5 (3.6)
	N	16		20		4		0		40		28	

a Other category includes full-time students who don't work, voluntary workers, people who care full time for disabled, ill or elderly, and people out of the work force due to their own illness.

b Number of cases in the cell. Note where number of cases falls below 20 results should be interpreted with caution.

* Confidence intervals indicate that differences between men and women in these households are statistically significant from each other at P<.05.

Table 3: OLS Regression Models showing the association between individual and household characteristics and hours (per week) spent doing Housework, by Gender ^a

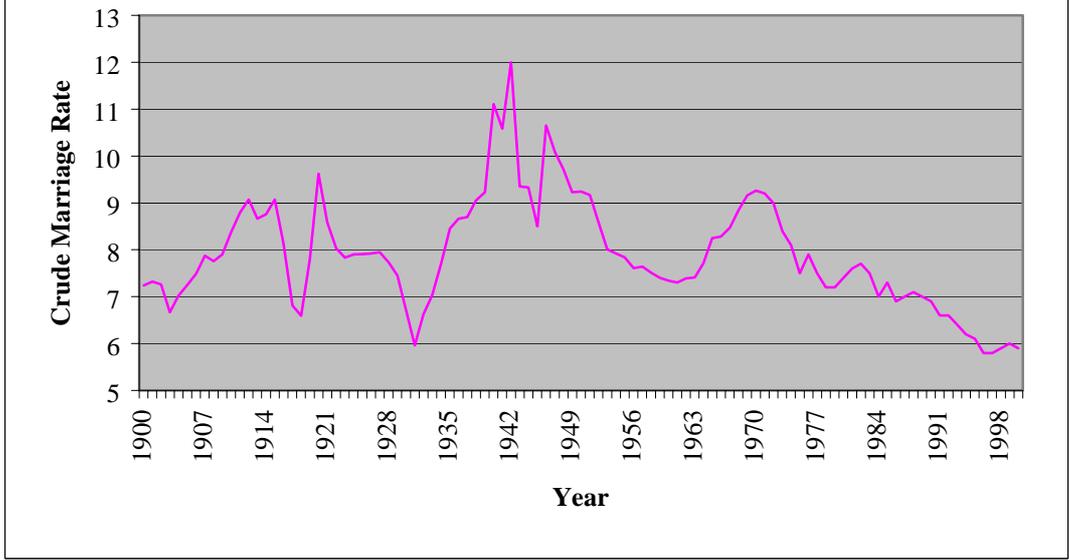
	M1: Marital Status		M2: Marital Status and Children		M3: Marital Status and Labor Market Characteristics		M4: Marital Status and Gender/Work Attitudes		M5: Marital Status and Gender Income Gap		M6: All Variables.	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Married	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
De facto	1.19**	-4.03**	1.67**	-1.57*	0.81**	-2.99**	1.10**	-3.91**	1.15**	-3.50**	1.21**	-1.33
Separated	3.91**	-2.33*	4.37**	-1.99	3.45**	-2.26*	3.94**	-2.32*	4.16**	1.86	4.08**	-0.41
Divorced	5.27**	-5.41**	5.79**	-3.87**	4.83**	-4.13**	5.28**	-5.35**	5.49**	-1.19	5.49**	-1.64*
Widowed	4.96**	-6.20**	4.95**	-6.39**	4.53**	-6.68**	5.01**	-6.09**	5.27**	-2.70**	4.73**	-5.00**
Never Married	1.29**	-10.42**	2.32**	-5.72**	0.30	-9.18**	1.43**	-10.23**	1.50**	-5.99**	1.57**	-4.34**
Number of Children			0.42**	2.70**							0.55**	2.13**
Pre-school Child			1.26**	4.82**							0.85*	1.98**
Employed					-	-					-	-
Unemployed					1.82*	0.01					1.93**	1.40
Retired					0.98	-1.07					1.02	-0.19
Home Duties					8.64**	4.53**					7.87**	3.81**
Student					-1.35	-5.28**					-1.13	-3.44**
Other ^b Employment Status					0.67	-2.60					0.65	-1.19
Hours Worked					-0.04**	-0.17**					-0.04**	-0.12**
Gender/Work Attitude Scale							0.12**	-0.19**			0.12**	-0.07*
Gender Income Gap									-0.01*	-0.08**	-0.01	-0.03**
Constant	3.44**	17.40**	1.69**	7.72**	6.60**	21.05**	-0.05	23.05**	4.47**	19.88**	1.80	16.50**
Observations	5658	6320	5658	6320	5658	6320	5658	6320	5658	6320	5658	6320
R-squared	0.04	0.08	0.04	0.14	0.07	0.16	0.04	0.09	0.04	0.10	0.08	0.18

* significant at .05; ** significant at .01.

a All analysis were adjusted for age of respondent and clustering within households.

b Other Employment Status category includes people who are not working due to caring for sick or elderly, or due to their own poor health.

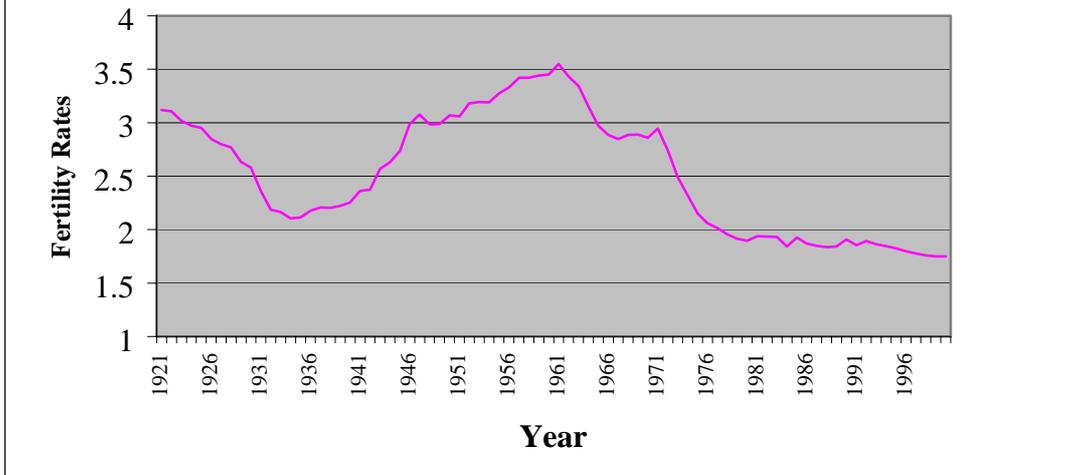
Figure 1: Crude Marriage Rates *, Australia 1900-2000



Source: ABS (various years) – Marriages and Divorces – 3310.0.

* Crude Marriage Rate: Number of marriages per 1,000 of mean population.

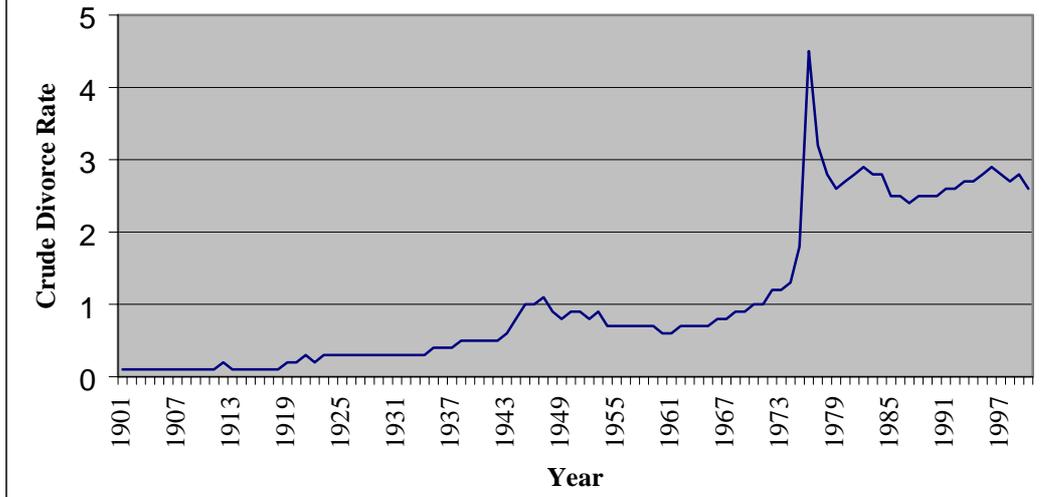
Figure 2: Fertility Rates *, Australia 1921-2000



Source: ABS (various years) – Births – 3301.0.

* Fertility Rate: Births per 1000 women.

Figure 3: Crude Divorce Rates *, Australia 1900 to 2000



Sources: ABS (various years) – Marriages and Divorces – 3310.0 (1901-1995); ABS (various years) – Australian Demographic Statistics-3301.0 (1996-2000).

* Crude divorce rates: divorces per 1000 mean head of population.